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Department of State TELEGRAM

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FEBRUARY 23, 1969
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OR THE SECRETARY FROM BUNKER

. I HAVE JUST CONCURRED IN GEN. ABRAMS'S REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY O MOUNT A 96-HOUR RETALIATORY AIR AND NAVAL STRIKE AGAINST THE ORTH BETWEEN THE DMZ AND THE 19TH PARALLEL.

. THE COMMUNISTS ARE PROBING TO SEE WHETHER WE RETALIATE OR OT. IF WE FAIL TO DO SO PROMPTLY, THEY WILL BE EMBOLDENED TO ONTINUE THESE ATTACKS, SOME OF WHICH ARE CLEAR VIOLATIONS OF HE UNDERSTANDINGS WITH HANOI.

. WE EXPECT ATTACKS WILL CONTINUE. THE ENEMY SEEMS TO BE CON- ENTRATING ON MILITARY INSTALLATIONS BUT MANY ARE IN OR NEAR ITIES. HUE AND DANANG APPEAR HIGH ON LIST OF CITIES TO BE TTACKED.

. I THINK IT HIGHLY IMPORTANT TO GET THE MESSAGE TO HANOI THAT, HILE WE ARE READY TO TRY TO REACH REASONABLE AGREEMENTS IN PARIS, HERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT THAT WE WILL REACT FIRMLY AND SPEEDILY O THIS KIND OF ATTACK.
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State Dept. review completed

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